



A Bassoon Lite Please... Rise and Fall of The Roman Bassoonpire

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Lacivious Pompous sat before his computorus screenus. The Hoards were recently reported to have crossed the Rubiconus Wettus.

“M’Lord,” his trusty assistant had informed him only a few moments earlier. “The Hoards are expected to be at the gates shortly.”

Screenus, screenus on the wall,
Will the hoards make us fall?
Shall I flee or wait to see,
What fate awaits us all?

The computerus screenus, a fairly new model, with many new bells and whistles, including the much ballyhooed Atomicus Bassoonicus option, blinked, winked, gurgled and hummed. An image of his leader, Emporus Moreporus, gained focus.

“No doubt the scene is sunk,
Fumigated by striped skunk,
Who promised border titus
Which saner heads did not debunk.”

Lacivious Pompous watched as the screen faded from grayus flayus to blakus darkus. The keyboard lit up, twinkling in a rainbow of colors, the largest button among them, blinking a bright orangus tangerinus, said, “Atomicus Bassoonicus Option.”

Throughout the two-thousand-year history of the empire no emperor had ever pushed the “Atomicus Bassoonicus Option” for the simple reason that it had never been offered before. Previous models had gone so far as to offer the Conductorus Disappearus button, or the Principal Cellustus Self-Destructus button. For perhaps five-hundred years the Computerus Figuroutus had included at no extra charge an automated raisus button. But so many of the empire’s orchestras had gone out of businus operationus, the emperor had forbidden the continuance of that particular feature.

But now was a new era. A new emperor was appearing on the scene. He had promised to sweep away the old gladiators and bring in ones who promised to eliminate the lions at the gates without pussy-footingus for a preamble. And he had good orange hair. At this very moment he would be crossing the Rubiconus Wettus and ...

The computerus screenus blinked into life. The image of the leader of the Hoards appeared beneath an orange halo.

“Hello there, in the Castleus Ancientus. Come out with your hands up and no one will be deported immediately. Maybe later, maybe, maybe. I don’t know. Have to think about it. A beautiful concept ... but maybe, maybe.”

Lacivious Pompous licked his lips. To be deported meant he might have to return to his old orchestra, the one that played “Pompus Und Circumstansus” every concert. It was something he thought he was eternally safe from enduring ever again. He punched the “safe” button. The screen went darkus blackus.

He could hear footsteps approaching the moatus widus below. Two thousand years of civilization, of never having to play “Pompus Und Circumstansus.” And now this. The Hoards at the gates demanding, demanding, demanding ...

His eye caught the blinking of the brightest button, the Atomicus Bassoonicus Option. Did he dare? The empire had barely survived the Principal Cellustus Self-Destructus option. It took, what? Four hundred years to find a new Principalus Cellus who could play the solo in the Brahmus Pianus Concertus without being flatus sharpus most of the time. And the Conductorus Disappearus button? What did that lead to ??... Hey, maybe it wasn’t all that bad. Six hundred years without a conductorus?

There was a violent banging on the frontus gatus down below. The leader of the Hoards could be heard demanding the best room in the Castleus Oldus.

“... and NO bassoon playing after lights-out,” he was hollering.

Lacivious Pompus looked at the bassoon he had been practicing before the news about the crossing of the Rubiconus Wettus had arrived. He looked at the Atomicus Bassoonicus button blinking its bright neon orange.

“Ahhh, what the Donaldus,” he said, indexus pointus finger dipping quickly downward.